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W. E. Sadler
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THE
Moral Function of the State.

A PAPER
READ BEFORE THE
OXFORD BRANCH
OF THE
Guild of St. Matthew,
On MAY 17th, 1887,

BY
D. G. RITCHIE, M.A.
Fellow and Tutor of Jesus College, Oxford.

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GUILD OF ST. MATTHEW.

OBJECTS.

- I.—To get rid, by every possible means, of the existing prejudices, especially on the part of "Secularists," against the Church—Her Sacraments and Doctrines: and to endeavour "to justify GOD to the people."
- II.—To promote frequent and reverent Worship in the Holy Communion, and a better observance of the teaching of the Church of England as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.[†]
- III.—To promote the Study of Social and Political Questions in the light of the Incarnation.

THE MORAL FUNCTION OF THE STATE.

“WHY need we take an interest in politics? Are not politics a despicable tangle of personal ambitions, party prejudices, unworthy compromises and dishonourable intrigues, deliberate exaggerations and wilful misstatements, unreasoning admiration and intemperate abuse? Is it not wiser for those, who are anxious to do their duty in the world and to lead a life that may be considered well-pleasing to God, to withdraw from the temptations and degrading influences of political activity? After all, can even the best laws and the best institutions—suppose we could secure them—avail to remedy the corruption of the human heart? Does not each of us need all his energies to struggle with his proper enemies, the passions within his own soul, and if we can do anything to help others than ourselves, have we not our obvious duties towards our own families and those with whom we are brought into contact in the ordinary course of life? There is “the daily round, the common task”—is not that sufficient and more than sufficient? And if we still wish to attempt something further, is not personal help given to the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, infinitely better than anything that can be done through acts of parliament? Let us lead quiet and peaceable lives and keep ourselves, if we can, unspotted from the world, leaving the dirty work of politics to those whom God has set in authority over us.” (Apparently, it does not matter that they should be soiled.)

These are the sort of arguments that we very often hear: and there is obviously a great degree of truth in them. We know exactly the kind of politician, whom

people speaking thus have in their minds, the man who, while professing to work for the noblest ends, seems only to be loudly advertising himself and to care for nothing beyond the mere machinery of politics. An overwhelming majority at an election, a triumphant division in the House, the overthrow of the party to which he does not belong and the elevation to high office of the leader with whom he has thrown in his lot, seem the ultimate aims and objects of his life's labour. And, in contrast with such an one, is suggested the image of some unobtrusive individual, a hard-working clergyman who is not heard of outside his own parish or a district visitor, probably a self-sacrificing woman, whose presence brings hope and light to the dark abodes of poverty, suffering and sin. The contrast is impressive; but it is fallacious, if we assume that it correctly expresses the relation between politics and individual duty. There are many current opinions and many current phrases which help to countenance this assumption. Thus, it is supposed that there is a complete severance between morals and politics: we frequently hear it accounted one of the advantages of modern over ancient moral philosophy that this severance has been effectually and finally made. And if morals are distinct from politics, does not religion seem to be much more distinct? There is the view of those who are apt to claim exclusive possession of "Evangelical" Christianity, according to which, religion is entirely an affair of the individual soul: and, intimately connected with this view in logic and in history, there is the doctrine that Government has nothing to do with morality, that it is merely a mechanism for the better protection of individual rights, and that consequently a government is good in direct proportion to the narrowness of its sphere. Individualism in politics and religion is a good deal on the wane: and these opinions are not now quite so prevalent as they were; but they are prevalent enough to influence seriously the practice, both of those who openly accept them and of those who hold them unawares—nay, even of those who do not hold them, but live in an atmosphere that has been permeated by them. They arise, like all other widely accepted opinions that contain a mixture of truth and error, from the habit

people have of looking at a part only of the phenomena with which they are concerned. On the one hand, it is said, "You cannot make men moral by act of parliament:" on the other, "No one can shake off his individual responsibility for the use he makes of his life." These are undoubted truths. But to estimate the effect, and consequently the importance of government-action, we must consider indirect, as well as direct results: and to understand the meaning of individual responsibility we must not treat individuals as isolated and similar agents, equally free and equally capable of goodness. There have been many protests against the immorality of the doctrine of Predestination: but I question very much if it has been the cause of so much practical mischief as the doctrine of the Freedom of the Will—in the crude form in which that is accepted by popular philosophy. "What is the good" it is said, "of improving the condition of the poor? What is the good of more wages, better houses, better schools, of baths, public parks, picture galleries and so on? People won't be a whit better, unless there is a moral change, a change in the heart and character." Doubtless the arm-chair Christian moralist, who talks in this fashion, does not want better wages and better housing—he has probably a good house of his own and a good income derived from investments in the funds: he does not want rate-supported schools—he probably has no craving for more education and rather prefers that such education as he has should be a monopoly of himself and his class: he does not want a public park—he has his own garden: he signs petitions against the Sunday opening of picture galleries—he does not want to go there: and he has no temptation to spend his time or his money in the public house—he has his club and a round of highly genteel dinner parties. Has he ever considered how very much, how almost entirely, his respectability, which he dignifies with the name of morality, is the product of his circumstances? When the pious clergyman—John Newton, I think it was, though it may quite well have been somebody else—pointing to a criminal going to the gallows, said, "There, but for the Grace of God, goes John Newton," he expressed a perfectly true sentiment, though his way of understanding "the Grace of

God" probably took too little account of the modifiable human agencies through which individuals are influenced for good and for evil. There are heroic souls that even in the most adverse surroundings keep on struggling towards noble ideals—they are the salt of the earth; but most human beings are not heroic. The society in which we live, by its organization and the opinions to which that organization gives rise, produces its regular crop of narrow-minded respectable persons rooted to existing institutions, of wealthy idlers wasting their own lives and the lives of others, of weary toilers dulled into apathy by drudgery or liable to be thrown out of work by the caprices of the labour-market, of helpless women driven by starvation and social pressure to sell themselves for a living, of drunkards, thieves, swindlers and other habitual criminals, transmitting their evil tendencies to coming generations. And for all this we are responsible as a community.

In the middle ages, when governments were weak and administered too often in the interests of a family or a ruling caste, the only means of endeavouring to stem the tide of oppression and misery were private charity and private beneficence organized by ecclesiastical agencies. St. Francis might almost be called the renovator of Christianity, because he turned the religious enthusiasm of his age into the channel of active service to the poor and the sick. We know, alas! only too well, what becomes of charitable endowments—how there grow up wealthy and indolent corporations, surrounded by a pauperised and demoralised population, so that one is tempted to say of charity, in this sense of almsgiving: "It is twice cursed: it curseth him that gives and him that takes." It deadens the intelligence and conscience of the giver: it degrades the character and will of the recipient. This is a hard saying, and it sounds a harsh one. The giving of alms is a venerable duty: it has been enjoined in all religions; it satisfies, at the moment, the feelings of both giver and receiver; it seems, though generally in a fictitious way, to bring about a personal relation between human beings which is lacking in more indirect methods of attempting to remedy suffering. In those ages, places and respects, in which the State is so little developed as to be unavailable

as a means of relieving or preventing want, there almsgiving is a duty, just as indiscriminate hospitality was a duty as well as a convenience in the days of few travellers and no inns. But, if in changed circumstances we cling to ancient forms of beneficence, we are sacrificing human welfare to a prejudice in favour of the picturesque. The gracious figure of the lady of the manor, dispensing blankets and soup to the curtseying dames of the village, must not blind our eyes to the less pleasing features of the English system of land tenure, which, along with the growth of the large capitalist, are accountable for a great part of the squalor of our overgrown towns. The game-keeper's cottage looks very pretty at the park-gate: and there are perhaps a few model dwellings on the estate. But what of the rest of the rural population? The most fortunate are no longer in England. What has become of those that have not escaped from their native land? And, meanwhile, the Landlord sits in the House of Land-lords, obstructing all changes: nor should we blame him very much, for "'tis his nature to." But he is probably a liberal subscriber to all the local charities. It is not charity, in the wretched sense in which the word has come to be used, it is justice that is wanted by a free people. You give the crumbs to Lazarus; but why is there a Lazarus there? Charity is only a temporary remedy. We must face the evil conditions which are the source of misery and try to remedy them.

"For all this we are responsible as a community." When we have traced an evil back to *Society*, we have no right to quiet our consciences by the phrase. By the denial of individualism and of the supposed arbitrary and absolute freedom of the individual will, it must not be imagined that our responsibility is diminished: it is enormously increased. Because of the *solidarité* of mankind, no man can escape from being "his brother's keeper." For the miseries of our age and for everything that tends to mitigate these miseries we are indebted to those who have gone before us: and every one of us, by act and by word and even by thought, is contributing something of good or evil to those who are to come after us.

That society is an organism and that its history is a

history of continuous growth—these have become the truisms of popular science. But we are very much misled, if we think the truths involved in them justify any fatalistic acceptance of things as they are and any refusal to endeavour to remedy evils of which we have become acutely conscious. In our *consciousness* of the process that is going on and of the society of which we find ourselves members lies to be found what differentiates the social organism from the natural organisms which are studied by the biologist. In this consciousness, also, is to be found the secret of what is so often incorrectly represented as a non-natural and mysterious power of volition. The merely vegetable or animal organisms are engaged in a struggle for existence and those which prove themselves most capable of surviving do survive, (the 'survival of the fittest' means nothing more than that). But *we* can think about the end towards which we find ourselves moving, and we can pronounce it good or bad and can endeavour, accordingly, to accelerate the movement or to prevent it, or at least, to diminish the accompanying suffering. The wise statesman is he who can foresee the inevitable in politics—who knows in which direction the current is moving and does not blindly try to thrust it back, but to direct it in safe channels, making its force beneficent instead of destructive.

It is as a State, *i.e.* as an ordered political society, that a social organism becomes most distinctly conscious of its existence as an organism and consequently most capable of regulating the tendencies, which if left to themselves, would make its history a merely natural process. I do not say that the State is the only organization in which human beings feel their community with one another and their capacity for influencing one another's lot. By no means. The family and the various associations into which men group themselves, more or less consciously, come nearer to the life of each individual and seem more obviously to touch and influence it and at a greater number of points. Religious organizations affect more readily the highest motives, call forth greater enthusiasm and may extend beyond the limits of national existence; but the State has the greatest *force* to compel at least outward obedience in

the majority of persons and its working is the most open, and the most capable of being observed and criticised.

There are those who hold that States cannot affect the natural processes going on in Society and there are those who hold that they ought not to attempt this, if they could. It is curious how some who are fond of protesting against the belief in the State, with a large S, are so ready to throw themselves into the arms of Nature, with a very large N. If Nature be taken in so wide a sense as to include *all* human thought and effort, then the State is one of the manifestations of Nature which must be allowed its own capacities to struggle with the other natural forces. But if so, it is not logically justifiable to draw arguments from Nature against the State. If, on the other hand, the State be expressly excluded as artificial from our conception of Nature, what becomes of the advance we are supposed to have made from the 'mechanical' to the 'organic' way of regarding human institutions?

To clear the way, we must first mark off a sense in which the State *cannot* make men moral. No moral act, strictly so-called, can be commanded by Law. If an act which we call a right act, because outwardly resembling acts which are the outcome of a good character, be done solely in obedience to an external command and through fear of penalties, that act is not a morally right act at all. Only if the agent accepts the external command as reasonable and brings his will into inward accordance with it, only then has he acted in a morally right manner. This truth agrees with the principle, which is generally admitted in theory, that Laws are ultimately ineffectual unless they are in accordance with the opinion of at least a great part of the community. But another and connected principle is not always so readily recognised,—viz., that public opinion gradually (often, indeed, very rapidly) comes to adapt itself to a Law which may at first have been strongly approved only by a small number, if that Law be really such as to promote the social health and well-being of the community. Marvellous is the power of accomplished facts. A long, long struggle was needed to abolish slavery. How many defenders has that institution now? Catholic Emancipation, the Abolition of Tests, Extensions of the Franchise

afford other, though less conspicuous, instances in which what was once fanatically opposed has very soon after come to be calmly accepted. Most people are wanting in imagination and they find a difficulty in figuring to themselves society existing and flourishing in any different forms from those to which they are accustomed. Only let the change once be made, and if it be a wise and successful one, these same persons or their representatives will have difficulty in believing that they could ever have held other opinions than those which result from the changed set of circumstances.

Laws and institutions cannot directly produce morality, but they may produce those opinions and sentiments which go to the furtherance of morality. Even if the function of Government be limited to the mere police duties of arresting wrong-doers and punishing them, the State cannot escape its moral responsibility. For has it not determined, in at least certain matters, what is to be considered right and what is to be considered wrong? If the State aims only at protecting individual rights of person and property (as the phrase goes) has it not determined what these rights are? These rights are just what they have been made by Society; and if the State leaves them alone and maintains them, it thereby gives them its sanction and becomes responsible for them. Can any thinking person be deceived by the programme of the "Liberty and Property Defence League?" Do we not know that it means a defence at all hazards of the *status quo*? It is a league for the defence of the strong and for prohibiting the protection of the defenceless. Its motto ought to be "To him that hath shall be given"—in a material and not a spiritual sense.

Again, the imposition of punishments involves a very serious and very difficult moral responsibility. What will be the effect of various penalties on the characters of the persons punished and on those of other persons? If the State prohibits murder and imposes the penalty of death, is it not doing what it can to produce a certain sentiment of respect for human life? And when there were no Factory Acts, was not the State by its neutrality diminishing the checks to the reckless sacrifice of children on the

altars of Mammon? We may be afraid of making mistakes by interfering, but we do not escape responsibility by washing our hands and doing nothing.

Legislation would be a very easy matter if there were some definite sphere of individual right which could be known *à priori* and within which no state-action must come. But human beings are not atoms moving in the void without contact. The rights of the individual are exactly those which society gives him, no more and no less. Can we then lay down no rule at all by which to test any proposed measure of state-action? 'Natural rights' will not help us; for the phrase is meaningless or mischievous, unless it signifies just those rights which a well-organized society *ought* to secure to its members: and what these are is the very question to which we seek an answer. We have said already that the State cannot directly command morality (commanded morality being a contradiction in terms): but what the State can do, and what it ought to do, is to provide all its members so far as possible with such an environment as will enable them to live as good lives as possible—good in every sense of the term. 'Compulsion,' 'interference,' 'liberty,' are ambiguous words and give us little help in determining such matters. There is no evil in compulsion and interference *per se*: there is no good in liberty in the mere negative sense of "being left alone." The more the mischievous forces in society can be compelled and interfered with, the better for the only liberty that is worth having—the liberty to make the best of our lives that the limitation of our physical nature allows of. Opposition to compulsory education and compulsory sanitation means advocacy of permissive ignorance and permissive disease. Absolute liberty of contract means the slavery of the weak. In the sense in which alone Liberty may be regarded as an *end*, there is no inconsistency between Liberty and Law.

But cannot a great deal be done by voluntary effort? Is it not the special honour of Englishmen, as it certainly is their favourite boast, that they do not at every grievance call out (like those foreigners) for the help of the State, but put their own shoulders to the wheel and so escape from giving too much power to governments? Undoubtedly

very great things have been done and can be done by voluntary association: and, wherever and so long as political power is chiefly in the hands of those who have not very lofty ideals as to their use of it, the most important thing to be done is often to secure and maintain the liberty of association. But history makes it unfortunately too clear that associations are very apt to become close and narrow as they grow old and to acquire a good deal of the selfishness of individuals, without being equally accessible to new ideas. The history of monastic orders, of trade-guilds, of universities, of trades-unions, of co-operative societies, of philanthropic and charitable institutions shews a tendency in associations formed by voluntary contract to stiffen into rigid bodies, whereas the State, however some of its organs may become inefficient, is always in the last resort the outward expression of the national spirit and, where there is any spirit in a people, must grow and live with the life of that spirit. Thus voluntary associations are mainly useful *to lead the way in social experiments*, to shew in what modes individuals can best receive help from an organized body of their fellow men. But, as time goes on, they have to be modified and controlled by the State, or absorbed in it. I know that this is a statement which would be contradicted by the large majority of Englishmen; but I think that the recent history of Europe points pretty clearly to its truth. The growing activity of the State on behalf of the well-being of the community will still leave abundant fields open for the energy of individuals and of voluntary associations. When one set of evils is remedied, another will certainly enough be noticed. There are many things which we consider evils now and which we attempt to remedy, that were not noticed at all, or were accepted as a matter of course, in ruder conditions of society. There are many respects in which the world is becoming, not worse, but more sensitive to its remediable miseries. Again, new conditions produce new evils to be coped with. Slavery is abolished; but the evils which came from the industrial revolution have grown up in the meantime. The worst thing that can happen to a community is to be contented with its efforts in the past—to go on building the sepulchres of the old prophets whilst it slays the new ones.

The demand for increased recognition of the moral function of the State is constantly met by the objection that States, as we know them, are little deserving of trust and that it would be dangerous to give governments more power. It is easy to draw up a long list of the blunders, the follies, the crimes and the cruelties, which rulers have committed in times past : it is easy to point out the defects in the best governments that now exist. The State whose activity we demand is undoubtedly an ideal State. Those who are perfectly contented with things as they are, would like it to remain an ideal, to be realized only in an infinitely remote future, or in another world. They may profess to believe in a divine kingdom of justice and brotherhood—only a few persons are cynical and candid and pagan enough to deny this—but they seem to have no real wish or anxiety that the will of God should be done *in earth* as in heaven. They tell us that Christianity has abolished the distinctions of race, of caste, of sex ; but, with a false idealism, they are very much afraid of “turning the spirit into flesh.”

This type of objection, which we have just been considering, calls our attention to the importance of what those interested in moral and spiritual progress are apt to despise and dislike, viz. the machinery of politics. “Why glory in representative government? Why care for mere political reforms? Why excite ourselves about the organization of representative bodies? Why make a fuss about the franchise? Why wish to multiply little parliaments, with all their idle talk, up and down the country by schemes of local government?” All these things may seem to matter very little ; but they do matter very much to the well-being of every man, woman and child. In themselves they are merely *means to the means to the end* that we really care for. And sometimes one set of means may be equally good with another. But they *are* means : and no end can be reached without means. It matters very much that the political machine should be in good order and capable of turning out good work ; or, to use a more adequate image, that the constitution of a country in its every fibre should be such an organism as to give a genuine and healthy expression to the “general will” or spirit of the com-

munity. How can a people realize what is best in them, if their government is corrupt, selfish, incompetent, or, while nominally free, is really controlled by long purses and narrow minds? Hence it is a symptom of disease when a large number of intelligent and educated and kindhearted persons in a country profess to be indifferent to politics. To refer to one matter only, it were well if the giving of votes at elections were regarded always as a public duty and its neglect punished with a fine, like the non-attendance of jurymen when summoned—not that the reluctantly given votes or the voting papers spoilt in bad temper would be of much value to the community, but in order to impress every one with the opinion that the suffrage is a duty to one's fellow beings, not a privilege to boast about, a source of occasional excitement, or, worst of all, an opportunity of immoral gain. "Yes," it will be said "we should take an interest in politics, if it were not for the division into *parties*. Are not the best men in a community wise in holding aloof from the wretched contests of rival factions?" Certainly, some individuals may be placed in positions where a strongly partizan attitude at elections would seriously impair their general usefulness: there are many cases where an honest man may conscientiously feel himself obliged to remain neutral: and there are persons of refined instincts and gentle temperament, who are repelled by the coarser and less scrupulous natures which political struggles are apt to bring into prominence. But one may be excused for having less sympathy with these Pococurantes of culture, than with the law of Solon, which disgraced the citizen who took no part in civil dissension, and the indignation of Dante, who did not hesitate to put a saintly Pope in the vestibule of Hell, because he made the great refusal and decided neither for God nor for his enemies.

This matter of parties raises some very difficult question of political casuistry, through which it is not easy to steer one's way. It is obvious that where parties exist, the practical man, the man who is anxious to help others by political agencies, must work with them. There are certain extreme cases in which any compromise is dishonourable, but in most instances we may go upon the homely maxim, that half a loaf is better than no bread—provided always

that our getting half a loaf to-day does not put an obstacle in the way of our ever getting a whole loaf afterwards. We must work on the whole with those whose policy, however inadequate it may seem, we honestly consider most likely in the end to bring about those changes which we consider necessary. It is better to shove a party on from behind than to turn round and slap it in the face, through impatience at the short-sightedness and half-heartedness of those who after all are moving, however slowly and blindly, in our direction. To give way to such impatience is only to play into the hands of our enemies. That, in any very near future, we are likely to find any of the great countries of the world with popular government and yet without party government one can hardly venture to hope. It is very distressing, that in the United States of America, where the constitution, making the executive independent of the legislative body, might seem to promise, as well as to imply, a government without parties, some of the very worst evils of party government have at various times been experienced. For the worst and most demoralising kinds of parties are those not based on difference about great principles, but merely on a contest between "ins" and "outs." Accepting parties, in the meantime at all events, as a necessary evil for ourselves, we must distinguish between the unavoidable use of, and co-operation with, parties, which represent real differences in principle or in method such as may occur between perfectly sincere and well intentioned men, and the deplorable habit of regarding politics as a gigantic game in which the sporting proclivities, that are the curse of English life, find opportunity of gratification as an agreeable variety from the turf and the stock-exchange. If politics are a game, it must not be forgotten that the pieces played with are human bodies and human souls. It rests with everyone who has any sense of public duty to aid in the formation of a saner public opinion on the subject. Not by disdaining and disregarding political movements, but by considering them always in the light of their bearing on the moral elevation of human beings, can we hope to spiritualize, or, let me say, to Christianize the State.

Corresponding to, if not identical with this endeavour, is

the endeavour to socialize Christianity,* to get rid of the narrowness and selfishness of much that is popularly considered religion and to shake indolent souls out of their trust in conventional formulas and their unreal way of apprehending the spiritual principles they profess to believe. This I understand to be one of the objects of your Guild: and so far I am most heartily with you. I must ask your toleration, if I have less confident hopes than you have, of the possibility of animating existing ecclesiastical organizations with this large and practical spirit. If it can be done, so much the better: reform without revolution means a great saving of energy. You at least "have not despaired of your republic." We often look back with envy or with pride on some of the great churchmen of the middle ages who stood forth as tribunes of the people and who, in defence of the oppressed, regarded not the anger of king and noble; but it is to little purpose, if we only dream of them as picturesque figures in a dim historic background and make no attempt to renew their spirit amid the prosaic details of modern politics. It is to equally little purpose that we praise Reformers who protested against the corruptions of the mediæval Church, if we have forgotten the intellectual and moral fearlessness, which is the worthiest part of the example they have left us.

This paper has probably dwelt too exclusively in vague generalities to be of much direct practical service to anyone. But it is occasionally worth while to go back on some fundamental questions: and political and social problems will be better studied, if we do not shirk an enquiry into the nature and ends of society and the State. The foregoing statement, being brief, is necessarily very inadequate, and many remarks would need much illustration and elucidation to give them their fair claim to acceptance. I

* Of course this statement implies a view about "the essence of Christianity" which many persons would repudiate. But such persons ought not then to be astonished that many of those who are most zealous for social reform have so little sympathy with *their* Christianity. If we really thought that the essence of Christianity was a combination of intellectual suicide with selfish "other-worldliness," we should not care about retaining the name.

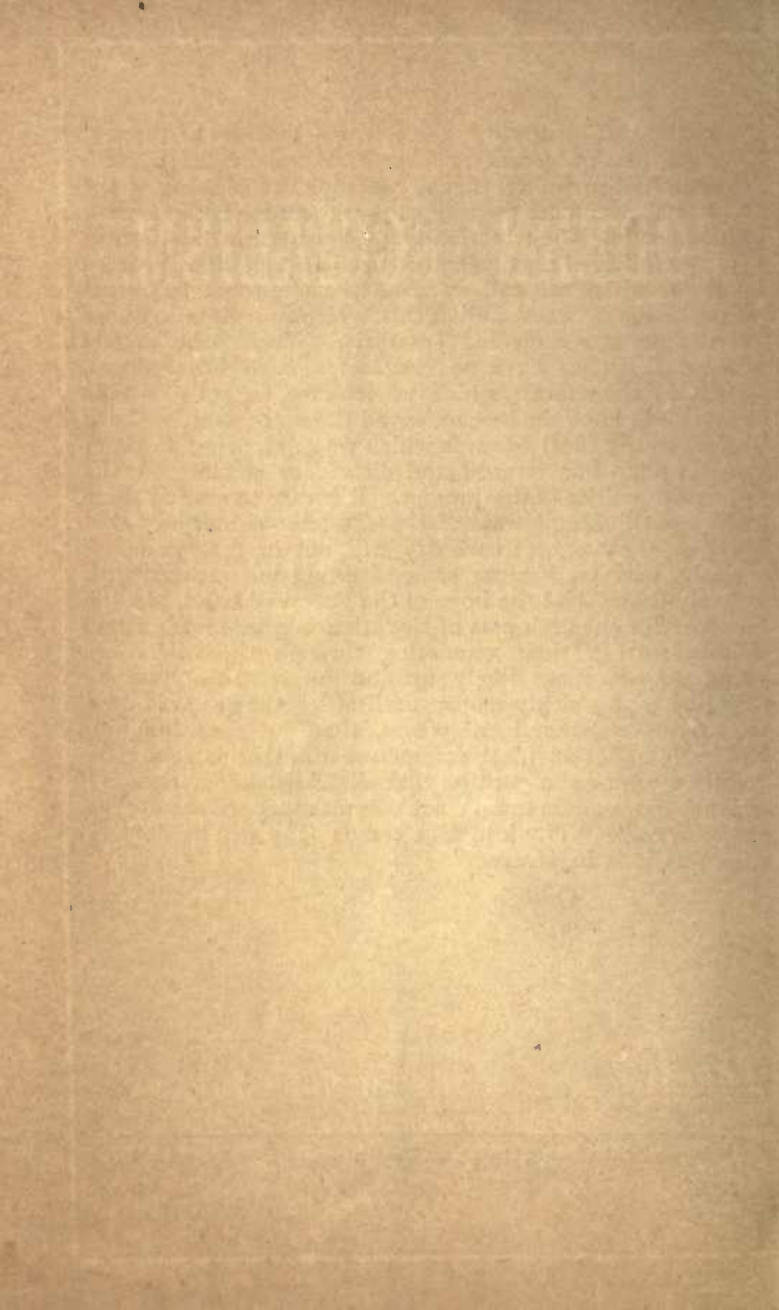
have said nothing about the relation between Church and State. But what I have said is consistent either with the view that Church and State are identical, *i.e.* that they are the same body of persons under different aspects, or with the view that the Church is a distinct organization extending beyond the limits of States and essentially independent. (These two views are perhaps not ultimately so incompatible as may at first appear.) What I have said is inconsistent only with the view that the State is in no sense a spiritual power, a view which, though maintained by very able men, seems to me hardly capable of defence; for, as I have tried to show, even if the function of the State be limited in the most extreme manner, it is still *indirectly* a moral function, and the moral interests of the community *must* be considered by its legislators.

I have said nothing about that part of the function of the State which is usually most debated, viz. its relation to economic matters. That question is so large that it has to be taken by itself. I would only now point out that, even if it be held that in purely economic matters the State ought not to interfere at all (as the phrase goes), *purely* economic matters form a very limited class indeed, if such a class exists at all. About the "laws" of political economy much nonsense is talked, even by those who ought to know better. What are called economic laws are not precepts for conduct; at best they are generalisations of facts, usually they are only deductions from supposed facts. Abstract economics are farther removed from practical politics than abstract dynamics from practical engineering. Dynamics, supplemented by practical knowledge of the materials he has to work with, will tell the engineer how best to construct a bridge; but the authorities, who determine whether a bridge is to be constructed in a particular place or not, must be guided by the requirements of human beings. The physician rightly studies the *law* of a disease, but is not thereby absolved from the duty of trying to cure the patient. And so, economic study may show that under certain conditions certain effects will follow; but, if the effects are detrimental to human well-being, our duty as practical persons is, not to acquiesce in the sacred name of Political Economy, but to

endeavour to alter the conditions. There is indeed a sense in which we have to recognise inevitable tendencies in human societies; but these tendencies are something deeper and stronger than the economic laws, which so far as they are true, are true only of a particular stage of social evolution and yet are proclaimed by the organs of the money-market as if they were immutable laws of nature or, through a strange confusion of ideas, as eternal principles of morality. We may feel great doubts as to how far the State—meaning thereby any one State as now existing—can engage directly in economic production except in regard to those matters which are necessarily monopolies. It may be a long time before any State can take upon itself as an acknowledged function the organization of industry and the distribution of its products—a function at present discharged by competing individuals or groups of individuals, blindly, anarchically and irresponsibly. But we need therefore have no doubts about the advisability of immediate State-action to secure the health and the intelligence of the community and a fair chance for its moral progress.

These two subjects, religion and economics, have more connection than might at first appear. One of the main difficulties in the way of a State engaging directly in economic undertakings, is the fear that it might thereby put itself at a disadvantage in comparison with other States. Even as it is, we know how restrictions on the selfishness and recklessness of employers of labour are met by the outcry that they are put at a disadvantage in their competition with producers in other countries where such restrictions do not exist. The movement for industrial emancipation must in the long run be an international one: and the way for it must be prepared by the spread of an enlightened public opinion and public sentiment. Now, a religious body which professes to be Christian and Catholic, *i.e.* Universal, is false to its profession, if it remains an organization of members of one nation only: still more so, if it consists mainly of one social caste in that nation. The Christian Church must be really democratic in its sentiments and it must be supra-national in its aims: else it is false to its professed belief in the brotherhood of all

mankind. If in any way the spiritual teachers of the race can be the bridgemakers to unite those divided by self-interest and prejudice, they are earning the blessing of the peacemaker and are preparing the way for the better society of the future. The materialist may consistently disbelieve in the possibility of putting an end to the competition between nations, which we call war, and the often not less cruel competition between individuals, which we disguise under the name of commercial enterprise. Those who profess to be Christians have no excuse for such hopelessness. Many of the reforms, which we look for, cannot soon take place ; but none the less, rather all the more, must we keep before us the ideal towards which we are moving, in order to stimulate our interest and direct our conduct in the practical politics of the present. It is easy to scoff at those who are thinking always of the day-after-to-morrow ; but perhaps the work of each day will not be done in a less worthy manner, because some of us are not satisfied with merely that. Not the hope of the Promised Land, but the memory of the flesh pots of Egyptian bondage made Israel disobedient in their wandering through the wilderness. And *we* are more likely to lead unprofitable lives by longing with a sickly sentimentalism for the good old days of contentment and subjection, than by cherishing an aspiration after an ideal commonwealth, that is to say, by really meaning the petition that all Christendom repeats : "Adveniat regnum tuum ; fiat voluntas tua, sicut in coelo, *et in terra.*" "Thy kingdom come : Thy will be done *in earth* as it is in Heaven."







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